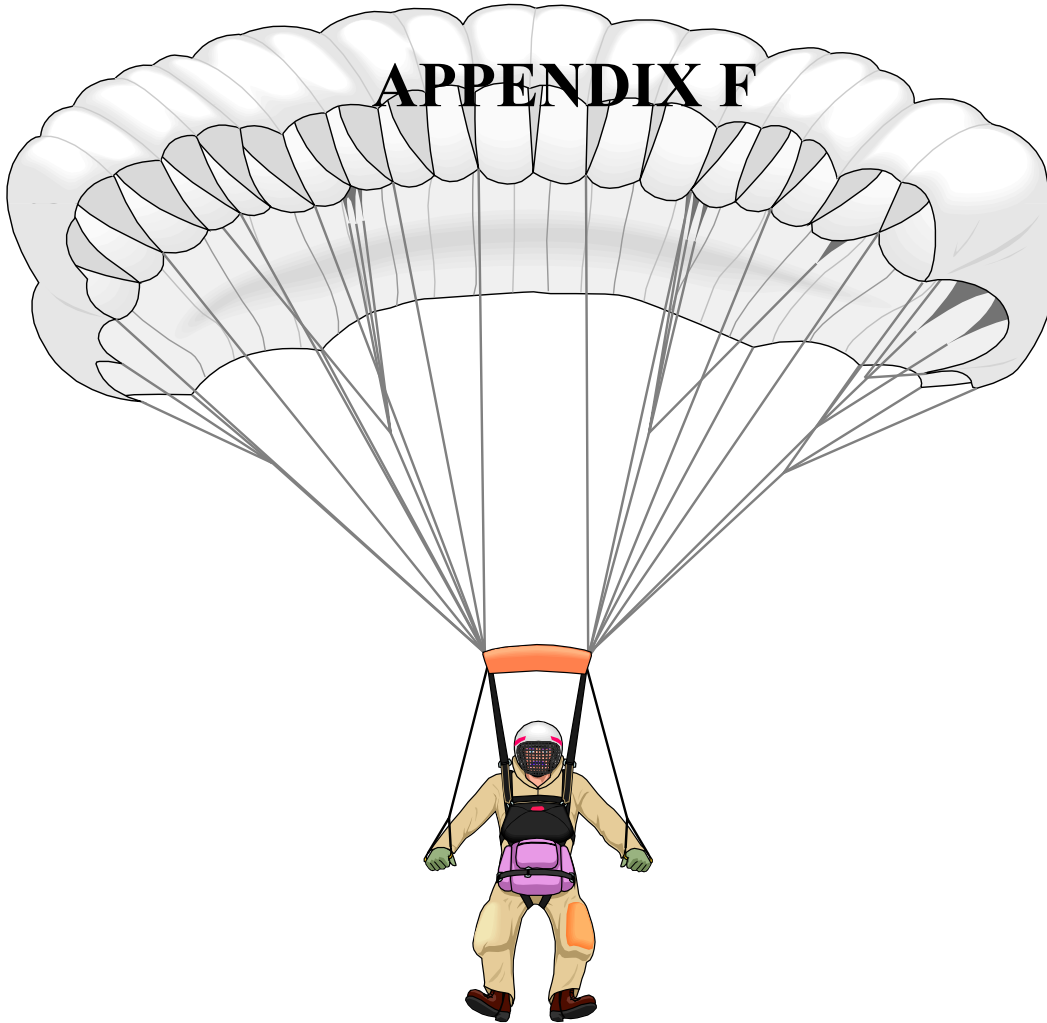


# **APPENDIX F**



## **NATURAL IGNITION FIRE GUIDE SUMMARY**

## **RUBY CANYON/BLACK RIDGE PRESCRIBED NATURAL IGNITION FIRE GUIDE**

The Grand Junction Resource Area (GJRA) has developed a Prescribed Natural Ignition Fire (NIF) Guide for the southern portion of Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge (RCBR) planning area. This guide has been developed in response to the objectives identified in the Desired Plant Community section of the RCBR plan.

The RCBR is a wildland ecosystem which is inherently dynamic and constantly changing as a result of plant succession, insects, disease, drought, windstorm, wildland fire and human activities. While most of these natural processes have gone on relatively unchecked, wildland fires in and around the RCBR have been aggressively suppressed since the early 1950's.

Fire is beneficial and essential to wildlands, and that by suppressing all wildland fires, man has interfered with nature. Fire returns valuable nutrients to the soil, opens up closed canopies, allowing sunlight to reach the ground, stimulating new plant growth. The new plant growth provides habitat and forage for many insect and animal species.

Fire is an integral component of the natural dynamics of an ecosystem such as the RCBR. The affects of modifying fire's role in an ecosystem through man's interference can and may have adversely impacted the flora and fauna of the RCBR planning area. Fire is one of nature's predominate forces and for thousands of years fire has shaped the landscape on the Colorado Plateau, dictating the types of plants and animals that inhabit the area. It creates a mosaic of burned and unburned areas, promoting natural diversity in the landscape and increasing edge between cover and forage for wildlife.

The RCBR NIF guide has analyzed ways to allow fire to be restored to its natural ecological role in the planning area. This could be accomplished through allowing natural fires, generally those caused by lightning, to burn within certain prescribed parameters. Fires in locations that could potentially cause harm to private property or human life, or to other sensitive ecosystems would be suppressed. The initial analysis has considered the use of planned ignitions under certain limited circumstances to reestablish the natural pattern of wildland fires inside RCBR. In the future as fire plans are revised and updated the natural ignition fire program can be extended to other areas.

During the fire season, fire managers will monitor drought conditions to assess the potential for large and severe fires. In the decision-making process, rough indicators will be compared to benchmark years that represent both very dry and abnormally wet conditions. This information along with threats to life and property, forecasted weather

and fire behavior, resource availability to manage the NIF, and local and national fire situation, gives land managers indications of the potential risk of any prescribed natural ignition fire.

The BLM realizes the risks and possible impacts of allowing fires to burn naturally and run their course. Some of the short term effects of this action could be the temporary displacement of certain activities including; the general public engaging in recreational activities such as hunting, fishing; range permittees and special use permittees such as outfitters. Travelers in the area may also be affected by natural ignition fires and/or wildfires. Trails that pass through or close to the fire area may have to be closed.

Other possible impacts could be:

As natural ignition fires and wildfires burn during fire season, some communities may occasionally be impacted by smoke pooling in valleys. Nighttime inversions, particularly in the late fall, may hold smoke near the ground. However, an active NIF program should return ecosystems to a healthy condition and reduce long term smoke emissions.

Effects on the vegetation, soils, visual quality, water quality, wildlife and fisheries.

Scenic values will change after a prescribed natural fire passes through an area and the burn area recovers and sprouts new growth the following spring. Fire, however, can enhance scenic quality by providing diversity to the viewshed.

Some of these situations could require individuals, permittees and communities to cooperate or even make sacrifices for the long term benefits of making the RCBR a more natural and useable place for all. The BLM will work with any affected parties to try to alleviate any impacts or conflicts that could develop as a result of natural fires.

For more information on the RCBR NIF Guide contact the GJRA at (970) 244-3000.